



WHITE PAPER

The CANDIDATE ATTRACTION minefield

An overview of the options available to attract talent

This is one of a series of papers from Sterling Manhattan. These are written for businesses that hire professional resource to help them meet the challenges of resourcing in today's complex recruitment market.

The candidate attraction minefield

“Attracting and retaining staff is now top priority for UK CEOs.”

Accenture

This is a tough year for UK organisations wanting to attract quality candidates.

A recent CIPD survey states that 82% of firms are struggling to find the people they require. Skills shortages are reported in many areas; not least in the professional marketplace, where sectors such as IT and Finance are experiencing a level of competition for the best candidates not seen since the build up to the year 2000.

Recruitment today is an expensive undertaking. The CIPD reports an average cost of filling a vacancy per employee of £8,200. But the cost of not filling a critical vacancy can be much higher when factors such as missed deadlines and lost opportunities are taken into account. It has never been more important to get your candidate attraction strategy right.

Candidate attraction is indeed a minefield and one that could have a devastating effect on business performance if you get it wrong. This whitepaper sets out the options available to those looking to attract talent to their organisations. It provides an objective assessment of the tools available in an increasingly complex and varied market.

The recruitment marketplace - an explosion of choice

“Where do
you start?”

Candidate attraction and selection is now a sophisticated industry with a vast and often confusing array of solutions available:

- Recruitment brand development
- Your company website
- Recruitment microsites
- National press
- Local press
- Specialist press
- Lifestyle magazines
- Radio commercials
- Billboards
- Online CV databases
- Regional job boards
- National job boards
- Generic job boards
- Specialist/niche job boards
- Lifestyle websites
- Websites of professional bodies and institutions
- Pay Per Click campaigns
- Guerilla Pay Per Click campaigns
- Generalist recruitment agencies
- Specialist recruitment consultancies
- Headhunting/search consultancies
- Internal market optimisation
- Candidate referral and networking schemes
- Reusable applicant databases
- Good leavers schemes

In the past, organisations tended to adopt a ‘silo’ approach to candidate attraction. With fewer options on offer, they developed recruitment strategies that relied on a single method, such as the use of recruitment agencies or press advertising.

The arrival of internet recruitment changed all that. Candidate behaviour altered, and a range of new options exploded onto the scene.

It is no longer relevant to put all your eggs in one basket. What is needed is a well blended cocktail of recruitment solutions. When selecting the right mix, it is useful to consider all available attraction methods in more detail.

Candidate attraction methods - your options

“Decide which methods of candidate attraction will achieve your objectives before you start the hiring process.”

In the table below, we have given an overview of the main sourcing methods available today, and tips on best practice. This is to help organisations make an informed choice when developing their candidate attraction strategies.

Method of Attraction	Description	Notes and Best Practice
Internal market optimisation	Advertising vacancies to internal candidates.	The internal candidate pool is a valuable, but often forgotten source of talent. Visible opportunities for career progression will boost employee morale.
Employee networking	Internal promotion of vacancies, encouraging employees to search their networks through 'Recommend a Friend' schemes.	In the US, 60%-70% of all hires are through referrals from employees. It is lower in the UK, but growing in importance as a cost-effective source of quality hires. The employee is paid a bonus for a successful referral.
Website development	Developing and promoting the recruitment section of your company website. Recruitment microsites.	A well promoted and up-to-date recruitment section on the company website is a good place to advertise vacancies. Many companies develop websites to promote a specific campaign (recruitment microsites).
Recruitment brand development	The importance of the applicant experience.	A very good or very bad experience creates its own momentum; 10 people tell 10 people etc. Forward-thinking companies are paying close attention to their recruitment process for all applicants to ensure that their brand as an employer is a positive one. This will motivate unsolicited applications and increase response to campaigns.
Direct advertising – traditional	Local press National press Specialist press Lifestyle magazines Also, radio advertising Billboard advertising.	Local newspapers are still the most widely used technique to attract candidates (CIPD). Although the share is declining in line with increasing use of online advertising, press advertising still occupies first place in the advertising market (this is increasing in the public sector, and decreasing for commercial vacancies).
Direct advertising – online	Generic job boards Niche job boards Local websites Lifestyle websites Websites of professional bodies and institutions.	Two thirds of companies now use 'e-recruitment' in some form, benefiting from reduced cost, broadened selection pool and increased speed of time to hire. Quality and quantity of response are sometimes an issue, so response handling is important.

Candidate attraction methods - your options

Method of Attraction	Description	Notes and Best Practice
Search engine optimisation	Pay Per Click campaigns Guerrilla Pay Per Click campaigns.	Pay Per Click is keyword-specific advertising. It is paid for when a user clicks through to your website (or microsite) from an advert displayed on a search engine results page. PPC campaigns are managed by daily budgets, so you will never pay more than you can afford to. Some companies also use PPC guerilla tactics which target competitors using competitor names and key words.
Online database search	Some of the larger jobsites have a facility to search a CV database.	Candidates register their CVs and companies can buy the right to access this database. Monster's CV database holds 2.6 million CVs; that is 10% of the UK (working) population.
Recruitment agencies	High street and contingency recruitment companies.	'Contingency' recruitment agencies will search their databases for candidates who match your role and pre-qualify them to check suitability and interest. Most will also advertise your role on job boards to generate response.
Recruitment consultancies	Specialist or niche recruitment outfits.	These are expert recruiters who use their skill, experience and established relationships to map out the target market and identify candidates unlikely to be found through the other methods above. These consultancies offer a different level of service to recruitment agencies: many hirers recognise this and pay higher fees for specialist/niche services.
Candidate talent pool management	A unique database of all applicants for use on future vacancies.	This ensures you make best use of candidates that apply to your company.
Good leavers schemes	Valued employees who resign are contacted after they have left to ask if they would like to return.	This is a very effective way to attract talent back to your company.

It is worth continually monitoring changes in the market. Technical advancements mean that new and innovative methods for attracting candidates constantly appear. For example, The CEO of Monster UK predicts a time in the not too distant future when, "You pass a bar or an office, your phone goes, and you're offered a relevant job there and then."

It is important to monitor new methods as they come about, and to consider each on a case by case basis. Successful candidate attraction requires you to make a judgement on the type of roles these innovations are relevant for, and how they can be used to best effect to complement and expand your existing strategy.

Navigating the candidate attraction minefield

“Organisations need a candidate attraction strategy which embraces a wide range of recruitment activities in a systematic and cost effective way.”

There is a wide and complex range of activities you can undertake to attract candidates today, including traditional, innovative and online options.

There is value in all these methods, if they are used in the right way. One method will work for one role, but not for others; or in one location and not the next; or will work for one time of the year, but not always.

Recruitment planning is key. Each vacancy needs to be seen as a new project, and companies need to alter their applicant attraction tactics to reflect changing market conditions and the specific requirements of each role.

To ensure consistent delivery of candidates across different functions and over time and across locations, what is needed is:

- a. Intelligence: information on the benefits and use of each approach.
- b. A candidate attraction strategy which embraces the relevant use of a wide range of recruitment activities in a systematic and cost-effective way.

Engaging an expert is one way to find your way through the minefield, be this a specialist recruitment consultancy, a recruitment advertising agency or your own internal resource consultant.

What to do next?

1. Analyse your organisation's roles and requirements
2. Research and cost up the range of candidate attraction methods shown in this paper
3. Match these to your roles, select your mix of recruitment solutions, and set your candidate attraction strategy
4. Communicate the new approach to your hiring managers
5. Select and engage suppliers and partners as required
6. Set up a formal recruitment planning process for all vacancies
7. Trial your new approach
8. Track, record and analyse response from each source, and alter your strategy where necessary.

In this way, organisations can continue to attract talented resource in today's competitive environment.

About Sterling Manhattan

Sterling Manhattan is a professional recruitment and selection consultancy. We specialise in delivering talent for critical roles in business and IT, from board level and management opportunities to lead technical roles.

At Sterling Manhattan we are passionate about providing an exceptional service that delivers results for our clients. Our knowledge, experience and commitment to a meticulous recruitment and selection process ensure we succeed.

Find out more

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